State Representative Spencer Black



State Capitol P.O. Box 8952 Madison, WI 53708 (608) 266-7521

April 9, 2003

Representative Michael Lehman, Chair Assembly Committee on Ways and Means 103 West, State Capitol Hand Delivered

Dear Chairman Lehman:

I am writing to you in regard to Assembly Bill 242, relating to the annual adjustment of the motor vehicle fuel tax rate, which has been referred to your committee. I am writing to request that this bill be given a prompt public hearing in the Ways and Means Committee.

I appreciate your attention to this request. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions. I look forward to your reply.

hALC

Sincerely.

Spencer Black State Representative



22 East Mifflin Street, Suite 900 Madison, WI 53703

TOLL FREE: 1.866.404.2700

PHONE: 608.663.7188 Fax: 608.663.7189

MEMORANDUM

TO:

Honorable Members of the Assembly Committee on Ways and Means

FROM:

Allison Bussler, Senior Legislative Associate

DATE:

June 11, 2003

RE:

Opposition to Assembly Bill 242

The Wisconsin Counties Association is opposed to Assembly Bill 242 (AB 242) which eliminates the indexing of the motor fuel tax in Wisconsin.

The Wisconsin Department of Transportation has identified increased needs in every area of Wisconsin's transportation sector. The Department estimates that approximately \$500 million annually will be needed to sustain Wisconsin's transportation network. Almost 90% of Wisconsin roads are local roads. Local governments depend on state transportation aids such as General Transportation Aids, the Local Road Improvement Program, the STP-Urban and Rural Programs and the Local Bridge Program to build and repair Wisconsin's roadways. Reducing transportation revenues will have a negative affect on county roads.

The Wisconsin Department of Transportation estimates that AB 242 would reduce transportation funding by \$62.3 million in the 2003-2005 biennium. The long range fiscal effect is even more significant.

Therefore, the Wisconsin Counties Association respectfully requests that you do not support AB 242.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at 608.663.7188.



State of Wisconsin • DEPARTMENT OF REVENUE

2135 RIMROCK RD. • P.O. BOX 8933 • MADISON, WISCONSIN 53708-8933 PHONE (608) 266-6466 • FAX (608) 266-5718 • http://www.dor.state.wi.us

Jim Doyle Governor Michael L. Morgan Secretary of Revenue

Assembly Committee on Ways and Means Committee Hearing, June 11, 2003

AB 242 - Annual Adjustment of Motor Vehicle Fuel Tax, (Rep. Black +8, Sen. Carpenter)

Description of Current Law and Proposed Change

- Under current law, the Department of Revenue annually on April 1 adjusts the tax rate on motor vehicle fuel by the rate of inflation during the prior year.
- The bill would eliminate the annual adjustment effective April 1, 2003. On April 1, 2003, the motor vehicle fuel tax rate was raised from 28.1 cents to 28.5 cents per gallon. Amendment 1 to this bill would delay the effective date to April 1, 2004.

Fairness/Tax Equity

- Vehicle fuel taxes can be considered a road user fee intended to fund transportation
 projects. Adjustment for inflation of vehicle fuel taxes keeps the real fuel taxes constant. If
 personal incomes grow at the rate equal to at least the rate of inflation, adjusting fuel tax for
 inflation will keep personal transportation expenses unchanged. Eliminating the adjustment
 will cause personal transportation expenditures relative to income to decline.
- The annual adjustment is essentially an automatic tax increase that takes effect without explicit legislative review or approval. Since the indexing adjustment was put in place in 1985, the motor fuel tax has risen from 16 cents to 28.5 cents per gallon. Of that 12.5 cent increase, 9.5 cents is attributable to indexing and 3 cents to statutory increases. As of January 1, 2003, only Rhode Island had a higher tax rate on gasoline (31 cents per gallon) than Wisconsin.
- Fuel tax increases can be an equitable and effective way to encourage fuel conservation and efficiency.

Impact on Economic Development

None

Administrative Impact/Fiscal Effect

 Eliminating the motor vehicle fuel tax rate adjustment that occurred on April 1, 2003 and would occur on April 1 in the subsequent years, would reduce tax revenues by \$4.2 million in the remaining period of FY03, \$20.6 million in FY04, and \$40.7 million in FY05. Restoring the rate in effect prior to April 1, 2003 would result in additional one-time
expenses for the Department. Assuming that the bill is fully implemented by July 1, 2003,
the Department would incur one-time administrative costs of \$304,200 to process refunds
for tax paid at the higher rate since April 1, 2003, and pay interest expense on floor tax and
motor fuel tax. Under Amendment 1, which would delay the effective date to April 1, 2004,
these costs would not be incurred.

DOR Position

No position with respect to elimination of indexing. However, the Department opposes
retroactive elimination of the rate increase that went into effect April 1, 2003 because that
would require sending of refunds to taxpayers and because the bill does not provide funding
to process the refunds.

Prepared by: Jacek M. Cianciara, 266-8133

June 10,2003

JC:skr I:\hearing\jc\ab242 hrg.doc

Halverson, Vicky

From:

Halverson, Vicky

Sent:

Friday, August 08, 2003 2:18 PM

To: Subject: Ford, William AB 242

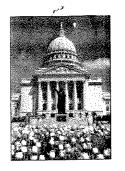
Hi Bill:

Before he left yesterday, Mickey went through the bills that he wants to take up at the Sept. 17th PH/ES. He wants to exec. on AB 431. He met with Mark Gottlieb yesterday and Mark's drafting an amendment to the bill. Suder's redraft of AB 299 will have a PH & ES. He plans to hold a PH on Wieckert's AB 319 re: TIF, and he wants to exec. on Rep. Black's AB 242 — re: the annual gas tax increase. As he previously mentioned, he would like to require the DOT to specify in their biennial budget requests that they want to index the gas tax for each of the two years of the biennium. Would you be able to help us get this amendment drafted?

I'm going to be out of the office from about 2:30 this afternoon until Monday the 18th. Mickey will be in next Tues., Wed., & Thurs. if you have any questions.

Thanks very much.

Vicky



Lehman

State Representative 99th Assembly District

Committee Chair: Ways and Means

Memorandum

To:

Ways & Means Committee Members

From:

Rep. Michael "Mickey" Lehman

Date:

September 12, 2003

Re:

LRB 3214/2 relating to Technology Zone Tax Credits, and Amendments

for the 9/17/03 Public Hearing/Executive Session

Attached is a copy of Rep. Suder's LRB 3214/2. You will recall that this is a redraft of his AB 299, which received a Public Hearing 6/11/03, and was also discussed at our last PH/ES. The bill will be numbered shortly. I'll pass along that number to you as soon as I get it.

In addition, the Committee will consider a simple amendment to AB 431, and a substitute amendment to AB 242. Copies of both are attached for your information.

As indicated on the hearing notice, the Committee will hold an Executive Session on these three bills.

Motor Fuel Tax Indexing Works For Wisconsin

Stable Revenue Base Allows For Long-Term Transportation Investment

Prepared for

Assembly Ways & Means Committee September 17, 2003

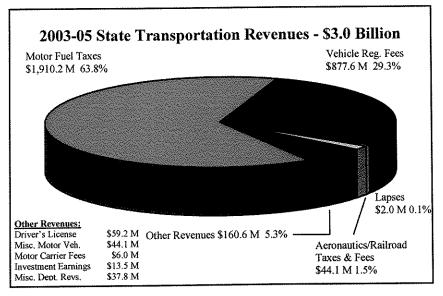
Wisconsin Transportation Builders Association

Wisconsin's Historic Reliance on Fuel Tax Revenues

Wisconsin has historically relied heavily on motor fuel tax revenues to fund many types of transportation investment. Since creation of the state's segregated Transportation Fund in 1978, motor fuel taxes have accounted for approximately 65% of state-generated transportation revenues. This remains true for the recently passed 2003-05 state budget, in which fuel taxes (28.5 cents/gallon) and vehicle registration fees (\$55 annually for cars/light trucks) account for more than 93% of state user fees deposited into the fund that supports all

transportation modes – an extremely narrow revenue base that is unique nationally.

The concept of indexing Wisconsin's motor fuel tax rates evolved during a period of high inflation and decreasing fuel consumption, a dangerous combination in a state whose transportation funding base rests largely on motor fuel revenues. Implementation of indexing in the mid-1980s has



stabilized this critically important revenue base and maintained the purchasing power of those state dollars. This long-term funding certainty provides the many transportation stakeholders who depend on fuel tax revenues with the confidence they need to make the type of long-term capital investment decisions that are necessary to create a dependable transportation system.

The funding stability created by indexed motor fuel tax rates — which provide Wisconsin's primary transportation revenue source a similar inflationary adjustment that other General Fund taxes automatically produce without increases in their rates — has received bi-partisan support to date in the Legislature because it has played an important role in allowing the state to maintain and improve the many components of its transportation system.

Established in 1925 as Highway User Fee

Wisconsin's fuel tax was created in 1925 at a rate of 2 cents per gallon. Since a segregated highway fund was not created until 1945, the revenues generated from the fuel tax were initially deposited in the state's General Fund. However, these receipts were appropriated for the purpose of developing and maintaining highways. In fact, the stated intent of establishing the new tax was to transfer the source of funding for highway programs from the general taxpayer to the highway user.

Increases in the state fuel tax rate occurred sporadically between 1925 and 1980. Motor fuel consumption grew at an annual rate of approximately 7% from the mid-1960s to the early 1970s, creating a predictable source of revenue growth that allowed Wisconsin to keep pace with transportation needs. Even though the motor fuel tax rate (7 cents/gallon) did not change during this period, increased fuel consumption provided revenue growth.

Wisconsin's period of disinvestment ... & the Legislature's response

However, in the early-1970s the supply and price of fuel were significantly impacted by international events, prompting the country to impose Corporate Average Fuel Economy (CAFÉ) standards on its vehicle fleet. As a result of greater fuel efficiency and public reaction to price spikes, fuel consumption remained relatively flat while the nation struggled with double-digit inflation. Fuel consumption began to increase again during the last half of the 1970s before falling for four consecutive years in the early 1980s:

Taxable Gallons of Motor Fuel & Special Fuel

Fiscal Year	<u>Gallons</u>	% Change
1978-79	2,692,913,114	2.5%
1979-80	2,532,206,865	-6.0%
1980-81	2,394,755,228	-5.4%
1981-82	2,301,789,016	-3.9%
1982-83	2,259,813,144	-1.8%
1983-84	2,353,887,309	4.2%
1984-85	2,343,792,339	-0.4%
1985-86	2,363,866,207	0.9%

When combined with the significant inflation of the 1970s and early 1980s, the reduced fuel consumption resulted in a major reduction in the purchasing power of the main component of Wisconsin's transportation revenue base. While inflation caused the price of goods to more than triple between 1966 and 1980, there were no corresponding increases in highway user fees. As a consequence, major portions of the state's transportation systems began to fall into disrepair. Resources were not adequate to resurface the large percentage of roads originally built in the 1960s, capacity improvements were non-existent, and an alarming number of state and local bridges were either structurally deficient or functionally obsolete.

History of Wisconsin Fuel Tax Rate				
·	Tax Rate	Type of		
<u>Year</u>	Per Gallon	Rate Change		
1925	2.0	Statutory		
1931	4.0	Statutory		
1955	6.0	Statutory		
1966	7 .0	Statutory		
1980		Statutory		
1981	13.0	Statutory		
1983		Statutory		
1984	16.0	Statutory		
1985	16.5	Index Adjustment		
1986	17.5	Index Adjustment		
1987 (April 1)	18.0	Index Adjustment		
1987 (Aug. 1)	20.0	Statutory		
1988	20.9	Index Adjustment		
1989	20.8	Index Adjustment		
1990		Index Adjustment		
1991	22.2	Index Adjustment		
1993	23.2	Index Adjustment		
1994	23.1	Index Adjustment		
1995	23.4	Index Adjustment		
1996	23.7	Index Adjustment		
1997 (April 1)	23.8	Index Adjustment		
1997 (Nov. 1)	24.8	Statutory		
1998	25.4	Index Adjustment		
1999	25.8	Index Adjustment		
2000	26.4	Index Adjustment		
2001	27.3	Index Adjustment		
2002	28.1	Index Adjustment		
2003	28.5	Index Adjustment		
Note: The Legislatu	re suspended indexing	in 1992, but provided		
two years of adjustm	ent in 1993.	,		

The state Legislature responded to the growing infrastructure crisis by enacting a series of increases in the motor fuel tax rate – from 7 cents a gallon in 1980 to 16 cents a gallon by 1984.

The 9-cent increase in the fuel tax over a four-year period surpassed the 7-cent increase that had occurred over the previous 55 years.

Suddenly, fuel tax rates in Wisconsin became a persistent legislative issue because the state's primary means of financing transportation was unable to generate sufficient revenues to keep pace with escalating demands across all modes. The transportation debate of the early 1980s was marked by constant crisis and extreme funding uncertainty that hampered the ability of state and local governments to plan for transportation improvements with any sort of long-term horizon.

Leadership on both sides of the political aisle because increasingly frustrated that each session of the Legislature presented tough votes on state gas tax rates. Even after casting these votes, legislators were unable to point to any fruits of their labor back home because the moves were necessary just to maintain funding for existing transportation programs.

A **bi-partisan consensus** began to emerge in the Legislature that indexing motor fuel tax rates was the only way to provide the type of <u>constant-dollar revenue stream</u> that was naturally generated by income and sales taxes.

Democratic Governor implements indexing

In 1983, Democratic Governor Tony Earl seized upon a recommendation of a *Blue Ribbon Commission on Long-Range Transportation Financing*, created by his Republican predecessor, to implement a system of motor fuel tax indexing in Wisconsin. The initiative was viewed as a long-term solution to the state's transportation funding needs that would prevent the dramatic declines in the purchasing power of revenues that resulted in a significant deterioration of the system in the 1970s and early 1980s.

It was designed to prevent the "peaks and valleys" of transportation funding and provide stakeholders with the certainty of an inflation-proof revenue stream that gave them the confidence to make long-term capital investment decisions. Indexing was never intended to be a permanent solution to transportation funding, but merely as a way to keep fuel tax revenues on pace with inflation. Proposals for real growth in transportation spending would continue to be subjected to legislative debate.

The state's diverse transportation interest groups largely supported the measure and it was passed by a Democratic Legislature.

According to Chapter 78.015 of the Wisconsin State Statutes, indexing became effective on April 1, 1985:

78.015 Annual adjustment of tax rate. (1) Beginning in 1985, on or before April 1 the department shall recompute and publish the rate for the tax imposed under s. 78.01 (1) and the rate under s. 78.14. The new rate per gallon shall be calculated by multiplying the rate in effect at the time of the calculation by an amount obtained by multiplying the amount under sub. (2) by the amount under sub. (3).

- (2) Divide the highway maintenance cost index, as computed by the federal department of transportation, federal highway administration, for the year prior to the year during which the calculation is made by that index for the year that is 2 years prior to the year during which the calculation is made.
- (3) Divide the number of gallons of motor fuel and special fuel sold in this state, as estimated by the department, during the year 2 years prior to the year during which the calculation is made minus any shrinkage allowed by the department by the number obtained by subtracting from the number of gallons of motor fuel and special fuel sold in this state, as estimated by the department, during the year prior to the year during which the calculation is made minus any shrinkage allowed by the department.
 - (4) The rate calculated under this section shall be rounded to the nearest 0.1 cent.

Initial formula included two factors

As originally approved and signed into law, indexing was intended to maintain the buying power of motor fuel revenues through two factors. A Highway Maintenance Cost Index*, calculated by the Federal Highway Administration, was used to determine the annual inflationary adjustment to the fuel tax rate. A separate fuel consumption factor was used to counterbalance the cost index so that decreased fuel usage would create upward pressure on the annual adjustment. These two factors, explained in the formula below, helped maintain the purchasing power of fuel tax revenues:

		Fuel Indexing For Visconsin's 1991 motor fue	
Step #1: Divide 1990 Hwy. Cost Index* by 1989 Hwy. Cost Index for Inflation Factor	'90 Hwy. Cost Index 228.23 219.09 = 1.042 '89 Hwy. Cost Index	Step #2: Divide 1989 Fuel Consumption by 1990 Consumption for Consumption Factor	'89 Fuel Consumption 2.523 Billion 2.542 Billion = .993 '90 Fuel Consumption
Step #3: Multiply Inflation Factor by Consumption Factor for Adjustment Factor	Inflation: 1.042 X Consumption: .993 Adjustment: 1.034706	Step #4: Multiply 1990 fuel tax rate by Adjustment Factor	'90 Fuel Tax (per gallon): 21.5 X Adjustment Factor: 1.034706 '91 Fuel Tax (per gallon): 22.2

^{*} The Highway Maintenance Cost Index was replaced in 1991 by the Consumer Price Index-Urban because FHWA was no longer committed to providing annual updates to accommodate Wisconsin's April 1 indexing adjustment schedule.

Republican Governor's veto maintains indexing

Indexing's only serious challenge to date came in the 1987-89 state budget, the first under Governor Tommy Thompson. A Democratic-controlled Legislature approved his request for a 2-cent increase in the base motor fuel tax rate, but also sought the repeal of indexing. Gov. Thompson used his line-item veto power to strike the repeal of indexing (while retaining the 2-cent increase in the base tax rate).

Throughout his administration, Gov. Thompson continued to support indexing not only as a way to maintain, but also increase, the buying power of fuel tax revenues to keep pace with unprecedented travel demands (vehicle miles of travel in Wisconsin grew 29% during the 1990s) fueled by a robust economy. In 1997, he followed a recommendation of his Transportation Finance Study Committee to remove from the indexing formula the fuel consumption factor, which limited increases in the tax rate as fuel consumption increased in the 1990s. This, in essence, shifted the focus of indexing from the fuel tax yield to the fuel tax rate. As a result, constant dollar fuel tax rates help provide some additional funding to meet the needs created by increased traffic levels, but only if fuel consumption grows.

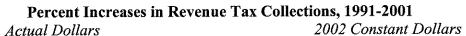
Difference between General Fund taxes & motor fuel tax

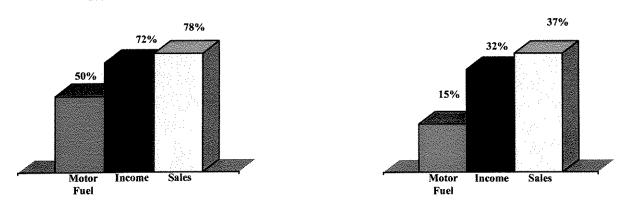
An annual debate on indexing usually focuses on whether motor fuel tax rates should increase without a vote of the Legislature. Neither sales nor income tax rates are increased without political scrutiny and it is undemocratic to provide automatic increases in fuel tax revenues, critics contend.

However, income and sales tax revenues are generated much differently than fuel tax revenues. Income and sales tax revenues grow naturally at the rate of inflation (at least) because they are tied to earnings and the price of goods and services. In a strong economy, this natural growth that occurs without a legislative vote can be used to expand state investments. By comparison, fixed fees such as the motor fuel tax must be regularly increased or the programs they fund will stagnate.

In Wisconsin during the 1990s, income and sales tax revenues grew 72% and 78%, respectively, without any changes in the tax rate or a vote of the Legislature. In fact, the Legislature voted to decrease income tax rates during the decade. During the same period, motor fuel tax revenues grew only 50% despite repeated annual increases in the fuel tax rate due to indexing and a one-cent per gallon increase in the base fuel tax rate in 1997.

It is this funding stability that has allowed Wisconsin to cost-effectively manage its transportation system over multiple years. With its base secure in an inflation-adjusted funding stream, Wisconsin has been able to avoid the additional costs that result from deferred projects and has developed an effective performance-based pavement and bridge management systems that choose optimal investment at the right time.





Coupled with a significant increase in the federal government's commitment to transportation through ISTEA and TEA-21, the stable revenue growth created by motor fuel tax indexing has helped Wisconsin considerably rebuild its transportation system. Since it was implemented in the mid-1980s, indexing has provided a consistent and dependable stream of revenue that allowed state and local governments to address a significant backlog of highway and bridge deficiencies while continuing to rely almost solely on highway user fees to invest in all transportation modes.

Motor fuel taxes in other states

Wisconsin's 28.5-cent-per-gallon motor fuel tax is currently the second highest in the country behind Rhode Island (See attachment and NOTE: Rates on map do not include sales tax collected on fuel in approximately 10 states, including neighboring states Illinois and Michigan). There are two key reasons why the state's gas tax is high compared to those in other states.

First, Wisconsin's elected officials have decided to keep the state's vehicle registration fees relatively inexpensive while relying on fuel taxes for the majority of state transportation revenues. Wisconsin assesses a flat annual registration fee of \$55 (increased by \$10 in the 2003-05 budget) for all cars and light trucks. This is below the U.S. average because some states use a multi-tiered registration fee schedule in which the annual cost is based on the vehicle's value, age, weight and/or mileage.

Second, Wisconsin is the only state in the country that relies exclusively on highway user fees for the state revenues that fund multimodal transportation investments. Many states have a much more diverse mix of state transportation revenues that reduces their dependence on state motor fuel taxes. For example, Illinois allows local governments to levy local-option sales taxes in metro areas to generate revenues for transit operations. Michigan dedicates a portion of its automobile-related sales tax revenue to transportation. Minnesota uses general obligation bonding, with debt service paid from the General Fund, for transit and rail capital assistance.

Since Wisconsin relies solely on fuel taxes and vehicle registration fees for more than 93% of state revenues used for investment in all modes, the comparative rate for at least one of them is bound to be high.

However, many other states have either recently passed large motor fuel tax rate increases or implemented some form of indexing as they, like Wisconsin, struggle to meet escalating transportation demand and mounting infrastructure needs. Ohio began a 3-year phase-in of a 6-cent-per-gallon fuel tax increase in April, and Washington raised its gas tax by 5 cents per gallon on July 1. Other increases are being proposed in Pennsylvania, Virginia, Maryland, Tennessee, Indiana and Oklahoma.

Additionally, as shown on the attachment, more and more states are turning to motor fuel tax indexing mechanisms to stabilize the buying power of this critical state revenue source as increased fuel efficiency and alternative fuels undermine the reliability of this traditional highway user fee.

Repeal of Indexing Carries Significant Fiscal Impact

A repeal of indexing, as proposed in Assembly Bill 242, would result in a significant funding deficit in both the current 2003-05 state budget and the following biennium.

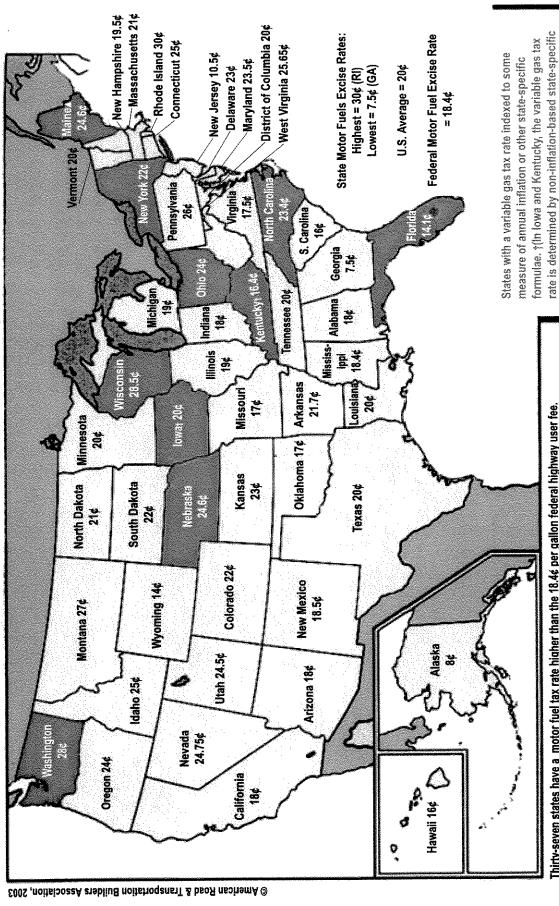
By eliminating scheduled indexing adjustments (assumed at 29.1 cents/gallon on April 1, 2004, and 29.6 cents/gallon on April 1, 2005) during this budget, revenues will be \$50 million to \$60 million short of current estimates. The budget already allocates only a small amount of state revenues to the highway improvement program, since \$675 million in segregated funding was transferred to the General Fund and replaced with Transportation Fund-supported general obligation bonding. Most state highway improvements are financed in the 2003-05 budget with federal and bond funds.

Consequently, further reductions in state funding would likely impact the programs that are funded predominantly with highway user fee revenues: state highway maintenance, general transportation aid to local government and transit operating assistance.

WTBA estimates that the Transportation Fund will begin the 2005-07 biennium with a deficit of nearly \$100 million simply to maintain current programs and services. The fund faces additional spending over the biennium of \$120 million for pupil transportation costs and \$140 million in debt service on bonds issued in the current budget to facilitate the transfer of \$675 million to the General Fund. The projected deficit does not include funding necessary for inflationary adjustments, program expansion, new initiatives or state funds to match additional federal aid that may be available through the reauthorization of the highway and transit programs.

The 2005-07 shortfall would grow to approximately \$300 million if indexing is repealed and the source of two-thirds of state transportation revenues is unable to offset the effects of inflation.

State Motor Fuels Excise Rates - July, 2003



Thirty-seven states have a motor fuel tax rate higher than the 18.4¢ per gallon federal highway user fee. The federal user fee finances improvements to the National Highway System (NHS). The 161,018-mile NHS, which includes the 46,467-mile Interstate Highway System, includes only 4% of total U.S. road mileage, yet it handles 45% of the nation's vehicle miles traveled.

Source: U.S. Federal Highway Administration, "Motor Fuel Trends" For more information, contact: Ashley Stow or Alison Black, American Road & Transportation Builders Association. By phone: 202-289-4434, Fax: 202-289-4435, E-Mail: astow@artba.org or ablack@artba.org

reflects the rise in CPI over the previous three years, and

July 1, 2003. A (The increase in Maine's state gas tax

States with a gas tax increase which took effect

formulae.)

from July 1, 2003 forward will be indexed for inflation.)

242 Asa

Vote Record Committee on Ways and Means

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Vote Record Committee on Ways and Means

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Motion Carried

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Vote Record Committee on Ways and Means

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